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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Westfield Announces Innovative Youth Assistance Program: One of Two Programs in the United States to Target Prevention

Westfield, IN – Westfield Mayor Andy Cook, along with Hamilton County Superior Court One Judge Steve Nation and Westfield Washington Schools Superintendent Mark Keen announce the creation of a unique Youth Assistance Program which will focus on preventative treatment for at-risk youth, rather than using disciplinary measures and adjudication. The Westfield Youth Assistance Program kicked-off this month in Westfield and the hope is to expand the program county-wide in mid 2010.

The program's goal is to identify youth in need of assistance prior to becoming part of the growing juvenile and criminal justice system. "This is a completely new way to approach at-risk youth," says Westfield Mayor Andy Cook. "We are identifying youth heading down the wrong path, reaching out to them, providing treatment for the entire family and ultimately ensuring that the child begins heading down the right path," says Cook.

The program will assist at-risk youth ages 3 to 17 years of age. The youth will be evaluated and treated based on specific needs. Treatment will primarily consist of, but is not limited to, a mentoring program, community volunteering involvement, family education, skill building tutoring programs and scholarship camps.

"We would like to begin to make a positive impact on a child's life rather than involving the juvenile court system," says Judge Steve Nation. "We believe by bringing positive influences and recognition into their lives, positive behavior will ultimately be the result," says Nation.

Referrals to the Westfield Youth Assistance Program will be provided by the Westfield School Counselors, Westfield Police and Fire Departments, community members and families. "We are thrilled to be a part of such an extraordinary program," says Dr. Mark Keen. "Our counselors have already made referrals to the program and the overall reaction has been extremely encouraging," says Keen.

Program Coordinators would like to reach out to the community of Westfield for help providing assistance in this program. They are seeking role models of all ages who can help tutor, mentor, or businessmen or women willing to help prepare youth for specific careers. "Community involvement is the unique piece of this program," says Hamilton County Circuit Court Judge Paul Felix. "It is amazing to see community members step forward and take part in the encouragement of our youth. This is exactly what will make this program successful," says Felix.

For additional information or to schedule an interview, please contact me at the about listed numbers.

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